



If you see a sick, injured or dead koala, call the rescue hotline:
6622 1233

Treetops

The Newsletter of Friends of the Koala Inc.

March 2014

Patron: Margot Sweeney (CEO, Summerland Credit Union)



Saving Ballina's Koalas – the Campaign

The contradictions in government priorities are breath-taking. Koalas are a case in point.

Before the State elections the NSW Government promised to better protect the State's koalas. In December 2013

The Hon Robyn Parker, Minister for the Environment named the Koala as one of four Iconic Species to be given Tier-1 recovery priority in her bold Saving Our Species program.

In April 2012 the Federal Government declared the combined koala populations of Queensland, New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory 'vulnerable' for the purposes of the Federal *Environment Protection & Biodiversity Act 1999* (EPBC Act).

Yet route 2C which is preferred by the NSW Roads & Maritime Services (RMS) for the Richmond River to Coolgardie Rd, Wardell stretch (Section 10) of the Woolgoolga-Ballina Pacific Highway Upgrade project is set to plough



President Lorraine addresses the rally outside Don Page's office, 4 March

through the regionally and nationally significant Lower Richmond koala population, separating three areas of known koala activity. The 13.5 kms which comprise Section 10 of this 80% Federally-funded project bisects a colony of up to 200 koalas.

We've known this has been on the drawing-board for several years. Those of you with long memories will recall Friends of the Koala, the Blackwall Highway Action Group, Ballina Shire Council and others vehemently arguing against this route back in 2004/2005. Time and time again the

RTA as it was known then was informed by the community, (numerous individuals, groups and agencies) of the significance of populations of koalas, potoroos and several other threatened species along the selected route. RTA/RMS has subsequently heard this information reinforced during each public consultation, via a parliamentary inquiry and in every exhibition period for the various impact assessments and other reports to date. Repeatedly RMS attempts to justify this indefensible aberration known as Section 10 as the route which by-passes Wardell.

In December 2013 during the exhibition of the [EIS] Submissions/Preferred Infrastructure Report, the attention of Ballina Cr Jeff Johnson was engaged. Like many others he was outraged that the RMS was going ahead with a route set to destroy Ballina's koalas when other viable options were

available.

The Study, *Koala Habitat & Population Assessment: Ballina Shire Council LGA*, prepared by Biolink's Steve Phillips had recently been released to the Councillors. Indeed its content was noted at the Ordinary Meeting on 19 December. The same meeting agreed to provide a copy of the Study to RMS and other relevant agencies for consideration in planning the Upgrade project, seeking their examination of mitigation options in light of the findings. Cr Johnson moved that Council write to the RMS, Don Page MP and others with a view to encouraging the RMS to avoid the Blackwall Range in any proposed routes for the Upgrade but the motion lapsed.

Cr Johnson, to his credit, did not stop there. Over the New Year he put together some ideas for a campaign and got talking. FOK's Management Committee agreed to partner in a community-driven campaign as did the Ballina Environment Society. The campaign launch was a well-attended public meeting in Ballina on 18 February. Speakers included Steve Phillips, Ian Ratcliff, Senior Solicitor, EDO and Dr Mehreen Faruqi MLC, the Greens spokesperson on the Environment and Roads and a qualified Civil Engineer. A rally was held outside the Ballina office of Member for Ballina and Minister for the North Coast, Don Page on 4 March.



Ben Garland (in the koala cozzie) warming up supporters

The time-frame for protest is probably short. The Department of Planning & Infrastructure is presently preparing the assessment report on which the NSW Minister for Planning will be basing his decision to approve or disapprove the Woolgoolga-Ballina Pacific Highway Upgrade project. These same re-

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President's Message

A recent editorial's (*The Age*, 8 Mar.) reference to parallel universes really resonated with me. It commenced, "There is a parallel-universe feeling to the federal government's hostile attitude towards the natural environment. In one universe, conservation and climate change are elements to be respected or brought under control for the very real benefit of everyone. In the other, nature is to be exploited with little restraint, and short-term political motivation is far preferable to pragmatic, long-term consideration."



Lorraine Vass

The writer of course was referring to our Prime Minister's now

infamous praise of timber workers, "the ultimate conservationists" and his intent to remove a World Heritage listing for 74,000 ha of Tasmanian forest.

The week ended with the NSW government announcing that state forests would be

opened up to generate electricity; trees otherwise destined for pulp and paper production may be burnt in power stations (at more than six times the carbon emissions than burning coal).

Australia's ecology is one of the most delicately balanced on the planet; a fact that our governments' policies ignore entirely. It's no wonder that protections in law for the Koala fail. The blatant hypocrisy of "iconic or threatened species" declarations; fraudulent consultative processes; and total disregard for the efforts and passion of Australians across the political spectrum working for responsible custodianship of the natural environment, disgrace the nation.



Julie Reid (l), Lorraine Vass and SCU's Associate Professor Ross Goldingay discussing research grant possibilities

Yes, I'm angry but anger isn't particularly helpful. The Northern Rivers has been described as the next environmental battlefield and we know we've got our work cut out for us. Besides, as always there are many great initiatives in koala management and conservation deserving of celebration which you can read about in this issue, for example, exhibition of the Draft Byron Coast Comprehensive Koala Plan of Management (see p.12), the long-awaited appointment of Lismore's Koala Implementation Group which will guide the application of the CKPoM, the case-study of Jane Wickers and Felicity Grace's habitat planting plan in Mullumbimby, the work we're doing with schools.

The Management Committee has already held its first meeting, welcoming to its ranks a new member, Julie Reid. Julie is this issue's featured Member



Not In Our Name, Prime Minister!

Profile so you can learn a bit more about her on p.14. The Committee is also calling for nominations for the awards of Honorary Life Membership, Tree of Fame and Certificates of Appreciation to formally acknowledge the contribution made by Friends of the Koala members

and supporters. For more information see p.9.

In addition to writing the submissions that so often straddle the Summer "holidays" and my usual columns, a lot of my time is presently spent on the Save Ballina's Koalas Campaign. It's lovely to be working with Hon. Life Member Effie Ablett again after so many years. Effie was on FOK's Management Committee when Rick and I joined FOK in 2000 and she led the Skyline Road Campaign in the early 2000s. We worked together on a number of projects. In recent years Effie's stepped back from koala conservation to devote time to other interests. Since moving into Ballina Shire she's become an active member of the Ballina Environment Society,

hence her involvement in the Save Ballina's Koalas Campaign. Ben Garland, another FOK member is also playing a very active role, setting up the Campaign's Facebook page amongst other things. The page has been amazingly successful, attracting 480 "Likes" since 20 February.

This brings me to the enormous support our work receives from the regional media. I'm not just talking about the Campaign although clearly it's a case in point. While *The Northern Star*, *Echo*ndaily, the *Northern Rivers Echo*, the *Nimbin Good Times*, the *North Coast Trader*, *ABC*, *2LM/ZZZ*, *NBN* and *Prime TV* all deserve special mention (and a big collective hug), we also appreciate the somewhat less coverage the other media gives us as well.

At the beginning of March I attended the Basic Training Workshop. It's a couple of years since I've sat in on it and I really enjoyed meeting so many like-minded souls from across the region, especially those who had become my Facebook friends over the past 12 months. Barb Dobner did a fantastic job in presenting and finishing up at the Koala Care Centre for a "warts and all, hands-on" tour worked well. Thanks to everyone who made the day such a success.

This issue of *Treetops* covers a lot of ground. I've already mentioned our Campaign, the FOK awards program and the tremendous work that is in pro-



Catherine Cusack, MLC (r) at the Koala Centre with Effie Ablett (l) and Lorraine Vass

gress across the region. Further afield, are the Office of Environment & Heritage's new policy initiative in koala conservation, the announcement of the University of Sydney's Koala Health Hub platform which will link experts from that institution to "on-ground" vets and koala carers, and news from the NSW Wildlife Council.

So, here's to another busy year, our 28th for Friends of the Koala and its community-driven koala conservation mission. Governments and their bureaucracies come and go but we're firm in our focus and our achievements speak for us thanks to all of you, our members and supporters.

—Lorraine Vass

Care Coordinator's Report

With summer drawing to a close and hopefully some cooler weather coming our way, koala and Hot-line activity is slowing significantly.

Quite a difference to the last weeks of November and into December which saw the Care Centre very close to being full to capacity. Just a week before Christmas all our indoor rooms were occupied and with only two outdoor enclosures empty I knew that some of our koalas had to be triaged north.



Pat Barnidge

As always the staff at the Australia Zoo Wildlife Hospital (AZWH) obliged by taking on whatever was needed to ease the workload. On 23rd December, fellow member Margaret Russell and I took six of our precious charges north for treatment. The majority of these animals are still in care at the Hospital being treated for chlamydia. Provided they continue to do well they will be returned back into their home ranges.

I am happy to pass on the good news that Barbara Dobner's three home-care joeys, Tabitha, Little Miss, and Tupence have now progressed to the soft-release enclosure, leading up to their eventual release. This is music to our ears however for Barbara it was very stressful. Apparently no sooner had they climbed into the big tree, than they shot straight to the top branches and were leaping from branch to branch showing no fear. Usually young ones like this show some caution when being moved into new surroundings but as Barbara says they never cease to surprise.

One of her little charges, Sabrina sadly died suddenly in her enclosure after four months in care. Another of our home carers, Jenny Graham has recently taken on a male called Scooter. This little fellow had apparently been alone for some time and came into care very dehydrated and in poor body condition. At present his prognosis is guarded. However under the guidance of Currumbin Wildlife Hospital and Jenny's experience as a carer he is making slow progress towards regaining his health.



Desley & Dixie

Car strikes continue to be a sad statistic for our rescuers as nearly all of these incidents involve beautiful healthy animals that stand no chance of surviving these traumas. The Ewingsdale - Tintenbar upgrade of the Pacific High-

way has seen the numbers of animals being hit or displaced more than trebled from the previous year.

A particularly sad road-hit was the death of a koala named Alexander, found by our Treasurer, Susannah Keogh near the Bangalow-Lismore Rd. This lovely boy came from Susannah's home at Eureka. He had been released back there after being treated for conjunctivitis. Susannah saw him often in the trees around her house. He had only been released five months before venturing away from this safe area which ultimately led to his demise.

Another tagged female found further along on the same main road was Camphor who had been tagged and released after being found in a house at Nashua. Just over a year after her release, she was euthanased due to severe spinal injuries suffered after being hit by a car. Camphor was only four years old.

Other tagged animals that have come into care are a boy called Rama, from the Myocum area who was treated for cystitis in 2007. On this occasion he has conjunctivitis and his age is now around 9 years. He is doing well at AZWH. Also a female called Karen who stopped traffic on the Bruxner Highway near the Tatham turnoff and by some miracle was not hit by a car is presently being treated for conjunctivitis also at AZWH. This girl had been brought in due to poor habitat two years ago.

At present we have three sick animals at the Care Centre one of which is an 8 year old female with a very cute baby called Dixie. Desley the mum was found sitting on a verandah on a property at Ruthven, during the very hot spell at the end of January. This poor animal was so dehydrated and heat stressed she was brought into care for urgent vet care. At present Desley is still feeding her baby and while little Dixie is putting on weight, poor mum is still not well enough for release. She loves her paste and vitamin supplements but motherhood for such an old animal is taking its toll.

Of course we continue to care for our four permanent girls who play such part in our education program. Hera "The Queen Mother" continues to rule the enclosure and Sweetie, who at times can be quite naughty sometimes gets a mild cuffing if she misbehaves too much.

Some of our releases for this reporting



Rosalie & Hera, two of our permanent care girls

period have been Cuzac, who was released back into his home range in Tweed Shire; Idris a very handsome boy who was much admired by his carers; Tank an old boy of 10 years (who bit me) - one of our locals who we released back into the grounds at Southern Cross University. Last but not least was the adorable Jack who was released for the second time after being treated for conjunctivitis again. He was in very good body condition weighing over 10kg. I was persuaded to allow him a small amount of milk paste each morning by his carers, talk about spoilt!!



Tank

A male that survived a serious dog attack at Ruthven was Jordan. After scampering up a palm tree where he stayed overnight, it was not until the next day that he was rescued and triaged direct to Currumbin Hospital. Veterinary examination found he had a fracture of his shoulder and some puncture wounds around his rump. He was kept at the Hospital for several weeks, getting lots of confined rest for his shoulder to heal and medications for the puncture wounds. Jordan quickly won the hearts of all the staff. Considera-



Jordan

tion of a suitable release-site took some thought. Eventually we found a lovely area to release him, still within his home range but no dogs in the immediate area. Let's hope he stays safe.

One unusual report via the hotline was from South Gundurimba. A couple were sitting on their verandah watching a spectacular lightning display, as one does during Summer storms. They noticed a male koala in a tree, close to the house. Suddenly a bolt of lightning hit the tree and the caller stated the koala was no longer visible. Upon investigation they found the animal dead at its

base, presumably struck and killed by the lightning strike.

On 1st March we presented our first Basic Training Day for 2014. With over fifty people attending I enjoyed seeing lots of familiar faces and many new ones all keen to learn more about our wonderful national icon, the koala.

Until next time, happy koala spotting.

—Pat Barnidge



Basic training participants

Koala Care Statistics November 2013 – 20 February 2014
Friends of the Koala attended to or provided advice on a total of 158 koalas

	In Care	Released	Died	Dead on Arrival	Euth.	Trans.	Unable to capture	Advice
Injured (2)			1	1				
HBC– Road strike (13)			1	9	3			
Dog attack (7)	1	1	1	1	3			
Diseased/Sick (58)	9	5	3		27		7	7
Health status unknown /unrecorded (9)			1	6				2
Healthy/Assumed Healthy (59)		1						58
Orphans/joey (6)	5		1					
Permanent Care (4)	4							
Totals (158)	19	7	8	17	33		7	67

To Friends of the Koala

We hope you had a wonderful Christmas and New Year. I know we are already at the start of our third month of the year and it is only just starting to settle down.

We would like to thank you for your Christmas and New Year wishes, and the amazing basket of goodies you provided us with. It helped to spread some Christmas cheer among the staff at one of the most stressful and difficult times of the year.

We continue to look forward to working with you throughout this year to provide animals with the treatment and veterinary care that they need. Without the dedication and support of your organisation and members we also would not be able to complete our jobs the way that we do.

As you are aware the Hospital continues to grow in awareness and each year we are busier than the last. 2013 brought the Hospital 8624 animals - a frightening new record (during 2012 we saw 7004 animals), and we know that 2014 will be just as busy and full of new challenges: already we have seen 1440 animals.

As always, the Hospital staff look forward to working with FOK and each of its members to find the best level of care for every patient presented.

Wishing you a wonderful year!

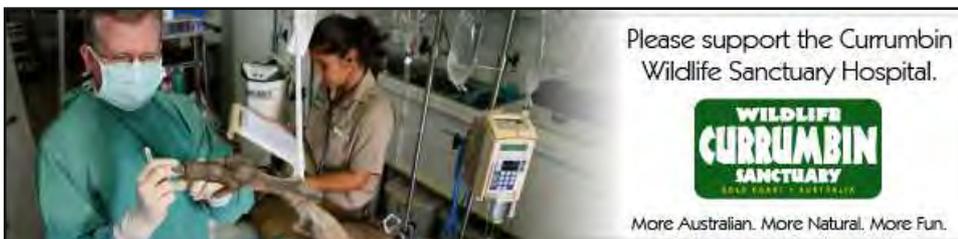
From the all staff at Currumbin Wildlife Hospital

Patricia

Patricia Swift

Hospital Manager

Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary Veterinary Hospital



Please support the Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary Hospital.



More Australian. More Natural. More Fun.

Care Centre Co-ordinator's Report

Here it is, March already so the pandemic of Summer is becoming a distant memory, thank goodness. The long holiday break is always a difficult period to cover at the Care Centre but this year an angel named Paige found us. She signed up for 5 shifts each week throughout January and was a great help to Pat and me during her time with us. I even took a week's holiday, thanks to Heather Simpson offering to look after the Roster. Thankyou Paige and Heather, I needed that break.

With over 50 volunteers working weekly shifts, regular Supervisors' meetings are a must. The first one for the year, held at the end of January was well attended. They will follow every two months.

February always sees an influx of overseas students, mostly from the USA and Canada who enrol for a semester at Southern Cross University (SCU). Many like the idea of volunteering with us and so far thirteen have been interviewed. We're now waiting to see how their study schedules shape-up in order to assign shifts.

SCU's koala sub-population is as much a source of delight to these students as it is to us and visitors to the Koala Care Centre. In mid-2012 Julia Buddee spotlighted several transects on-campus, detecting 18-21 koalas on each of three nights. For a long time now we have been worried about the number of deaths we're recording in the locality. So we're pleased that third-year student Josh McKenna is committed to doing his Integrated Project this semester re-surveying the koalas on campus. Josh is spending some time at the Care Centre to broaden his understanding of koalas and their health issues.

An EnviTE team of young people supervised by Chris Owen recently spent a day cleaning up fallen branches and other debris in the Care Centre grounds. The price we pay for our location in a koala corridor is constant tidying-up.

We really appreciate the help offered to us by EnviTE.

We were delighted to be visited by MLC Dr Mehreen Faruqi during February. Mehreen is the Greens spokesperson for the Environment and Transport. She and Ballina Cr Jeff Johnson visited the Koala Care Centre to see first-hand some of the koalas we have in care. They also spoke to the media on the plight of the Lower Richmond koala population and the Save Ballina's Koalas campaign.



Koala Care Centre visitors, Mahreen Faruqi (centre) and Cr. Jeff Johnson (right) with Sweetie

Veteran rescuer Craig Handy had enrolled in the tree climbing component of the Certificate II Arboriculture course at Wollongbar TAFE, attending the first day. At lunch-time the intake was informed that the course had been cancelled due to State-wide funding cuts. Very disappointing news for Craig and the koalas that his new skills would have benefitted.

Our first Basic Training Workshop was held on Saturday 1 March. It went really well, attracting over 50 enthusiastic attendees from across the region (a lot of people from Tweed and a couple from Clarence Valley).

After an anxious time with SCU's new wiring system, presenter Barb Dobner was ready to go soon after the advertised commencement time. Her new "scenarios" format worked extremely well, generating and maintaining a high level of interaction. The morning tea and lunch breaks seemed to buzz and the session finished up with tours of the Care Centre. A couple of participants took the trouble to give feedback – both commented on the excellence of the session.

Many thanks to Barb Dobner, Pat Barnidge, Susannah Keogh, Jane Tscal-

is, Marg Russell and Lorraine Vass, for helping making the day a success.

The raffle was won by Aysha Ndiaye from Byron (following a re-draw – Susannah's was the first name drawn out of the bucket).

Leaf Collecting Co-ordinator, Dot Moller organised a Leaf Collecting Training morning on Saturday 15 March.

I would like to say thank you to all our great volunteers. You are all appreciated very much. We could not do without you.

—Lola Whitney

The Disease Jigsaw

During 2012 a combined team from The Australian Museum and the Queensland University of Technology (QUT) announced that they had mapped the koala's genome. In the process they uncovered a vital missing link in their understanding of how koalas respond to infectious diseases.

Called the koala interferon gamma (IFN-g) gene, this chemical messenger plays a key role in the koala's defence against cancer, viruses and intracellular bacteria. The gene therefore is seen as the key to finding a cure for diseases such as Chlamydia and Koala Retrovirus (KoRV) which are rampant in koalas in our region. Identifying these genes in the koala will be a major step in understanding why only some animals succumb to severe clinical disease and others do not.

Already a molecular blood test has been developed to measure IFN-g expression in koalas. It has been applied on a small group of wild animals suffering ocular and reproduction tract disease at the Australia Zoo Wildlife Hospital. The results will provide researchers an exciting opportunity to examine the complex immune response to better understand how to successfully treat and immunise the koala population.

In the meantime Professor of Microbiology, Peter Timms and Senior Research Fellow Dr Adam Polkinghorne of the QUT team which has formulated and successfully tested a Chlamydia vaccine for koalas have moved on to the University of the Sunshine Coast, taking their \$1 million + ARC Linkage research funding with them.

The good news for the Northern Rivers is that the NSW Scientific Permit has been finally issued so preparations for vaccinating animals admitted into care by Friends of the Koala are commencing.

—Lorraine Vass



Barb Dobner presenting to a full house

Paige's Summer Koala Placement

I'm a Zoology student at the University of New England (UNE). Animals are my thing. I arranged two volunteering placements over the Summer. The first was at Australia Zoo during December and the second with Friends of the Koala (FOK) in January.

Signing up for five shifts a week at the Koala Care Centre allowed me to quickly learn the procedures conducted at the Centre for koalas in care. As a Zoology student I was keen to learn everything there is to know about koalas. I learnt so much during my six weeks and have enjoyed every second of it. The experience has ignited a passion for koalas that I never knew I had.

Each koala has their own personality and you can't help but fall in love with each and every one of them. I had a 'specially soft spot for a beautiful boy names Idris. He was the biggest koala I have ever seen however his sweet personality made all the volunteers fall in love with him.

Idris came into in care on 2 December 2013. He was rescued from a telegraph pole around 9pm on Ballina Road, Goonellabah. He had conjunctivitis in his right eye and he was suffering from mild cystitis. He also had a cyst on top of his prostate which Vet Ray thought might be a tumour.

By the time I came on the scene Idris had been in care for several weeks. He was soon making it pretty clear that he needed to get back into the wild.

On the 22nd of January we took him for another Vet- check and Ray was satisfied the cyst was benign and not affecting his general health. The conjunctivitis had cleared up but just to be on the safe side it was decided to hold over his release for a further week of observation. While it was disappointing that Idris didn't get the all clear, he was released on 30 January. It was such a relief that we could finally take this beautiful boy back to his home.

Not wanting to release him back on Ballina Road we found a much safer place that was still within his home range. After a bit of hiking we found a very tall Tallowwood that was perfect for his release. I opened the cage thinking that he would bolt right up, however he sat in the cage for a good few minutes looking around, not too sure what to do. He finally focused his attention on the tree and jumped straight up. He climbed a few metres up and looked down at us, probably half expecting us to catch him again. When he realised that we were letting him go he climbed right to the top of the tree.

As we started to drive away he was still at the top of the tree looking out at his surroundings, finally he was home. I was so fortunate to be the one to release Idris. It was such a magical moment that I will never forget and will cherish for a lifetime.

Our ever-increasing population is the reason why our native animals are in decline. We are so lucky to have these creatures in our world and it is our responsibility to protect and save

them. Volunteering at the Koala Care Centre has allowed me to witness the amazing job that FOK is doing firsthand. It has been a privilege to work with so many devoted volunteers that are dedicated to the survival of these remarkable animals. It is so important that our community continues to support organisations like FOK so they can continue to ensure the survival of these beautiful creatures for generations to come.

—Paige Matthews



Paige releasing Idris



Idris saying his 'Goodbyes'

The Koala Health Hub

The 'Koala Health Hub' (KHH) is a newly established platform that links expert groups of different koala health disciplines at the Faculty of Veterinary Science at the University of Sydney with Veterinarians and Koala Carers, to collaboratively support koala health and welfare.

Who is behind the KHH?

The KHH brings the outcomes of the Faculty's research to those at the coal face of koala care, in the form of diagnostic tests, and expertise in koala disease, testing and treatment.

The 'Koala Infectious Disease Research Group' (KIDReG) is comprised of a diverse group of leading wildlife disease researchers, including the director of the Koala Health Hub Dr. Damien Higgins (wildlife disease ecology and immunopathology), Associate Prof. Mark Krockenberger (host-pathogen-environment interactions), Associate



KHH Director, Damien Higgins and friend

Prof. Merran Govendir (veterinary pharmacology), Prof. Paul Canfield (pathogenesis of wildlife diseases), Dr. Richard Malik (veterinary medicine) and Dr. Susan Hemsley (marsupial anatomy and immunology). In addition there are of course the fulltime PhD students, who are continuously in action (see *KIDReG News*, Treetops December 2013, p.6). Their research has provided much needed information on treatment of *Chlamydia*, *Cryptococcus* and pain, and has resulted in many of the tests the Hub will offer. We hope the Hub will also provide an avenue for other leading koala researchers at the university to connect with those directly involved in koala care.

Additional clinical expertise and direct care for local koalas is offered by the University of Sydney's wildlife clinic at Camden, which delivers high quality medical and surgical care for all wildlife, including the koala. They also provide veterinary student training and resources in the area of wildlife medicine and surgery.

The KHH is heavily supported by the faculty's Veterinary Pathology Diagnostic Service, which

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—from page 6 provides a high level of koala pathology and post-mortem expertise and contributes its record keeping systems, which can be used to evaluate trends in koala diseases or collect a lot of important information for future koala disease investigations.

Who will benefit from KHH?

The KHH will provide benefits to the koalas by supporting koala hospitals, veterinarians, researchers and other koala stakeholders to do their work at a highest level and based on latest scientific and clinical findings. We can provide advice on treatment, chlamydial testing, and a range of other tests that your veterinarians might request. We also hope that the closer ties between our Faculty and Koala Carers will provide a way for their appreciated feedback and on the valuable knowledge of Carers to inform us about how to best direct our future research.

Where did the financial support come from?

In the 1980s the Koala Park Sanctuary in West Pennant Hills collected funds for a new koala hospital and research centre. The public responded with great generosity; even thousands of generous school children brought bags of coins to be invested in the future of their koalas. We are very pleased that this money is now able to make an investment into koala health activities and improve the welfare of our koalas.

Web links

Koala Health Hub:

http://sydney.edu.au/vetscience/wildlife_health/koalahealth.shtml

Koala Infectious Diseases Research Group:

<http://sydney.edu.au/vetscience/research/koala/index.shtml>

Wildlife Health at the University of Sydney Faculty of Veterinary Science: http://sydney.edu.au/vetscience/wildlife_health/index.shtml

Recent publications

We have exciting news to report on our most recent paper, published by Iona Maher, Joanna Griffith, Quintin Lau, Thomas Reeves and Damien Higgins.

“Expression profiles of the immune genes CD4, CD8 β , IFN γ , IL-4, IL-6 and IL-10 in mitogen-stimulated koala lymphocytes (Phascolarctos cinereus) by qRT-PCR”

<https://peerj.com/articles/280/>

A novel method for investigations into the koala's immune response was established that provides the unique opportunity to directly measure the koala's immune response to infectious agents. Before this these measurements were very limited or impossible due to the lack of koala-specific reagents and methods, but the authors developed the necessary components and techniques to ex-

—from page 1

ports will be forwarded to the Federal Minister for him to decide whether the impacts are acceptable in regard to matters covered by the EPBC Act.

So, why are we persevering at this late stage of the project when our previous petitioning has failed? Well, we believe both Ministers must take into account the scientific information published in the Ballina Habitat Study. The Federal Minister is also obliged to consider Steve Phillips' firm assertion that the koala population to be impacted is of national significance, meeting two of the criteria for recognition as an “important” population for the purposes of the EPBC Act: (a) it's a key source population either for breeding or dispersal, and (b) it's a population that is necessary for maintaining genetic diversity.

The intransigent dismissal of other route options by RMS is also intriguing. Back in 2005 route 2C was unanimously opposed and not supported in the formal public consultation period; it was not the preferred route in the Value Management Workshop held in July of that year; it was not identified as the preferred route in the technical studies and it is 2kms longer than the existing Highway. Why then has RMS persisted with route 2C? The only apparent justification is that it lines up six shale and basalt quarries in the region. “Cheap” by which I mean available road fill at the cost of Koalas and other threatened species!

To date the Save Ballina's Koalas campaign has attracted excellent coverage from the regional media but only a couple of reports in the influential but competitive Sydney media. Both The Greens and Labor have issued media releases and we have had a helpful champion in the Nature Conservation Council of NSW. The International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) has also come on board, issuing an Action Alert to their members and supporters. A Save Ballina's Koalas Facebook page has been created. Most recently, Lennox Head based Liberal MLC, Catherine Cusack has pledged her assistance.

The three websites below are offering either a template letter which will be forwarded to the appropriate politicians or a petition for signing which will be presented to the NSW Parliament. You can help the Campaign by taking action at:

<http://www.ifaw.org/australia/get-involved/protect-ballinas-koalas-bulldozers>

<http://www.communityrun.org/petitions/save-ballina-s-koala-s?source=facebook-share-button&time=1391750376>

<https://mehreenfaruqi.good.do/koalas/save-the-ballina-koalas/>

A hard copy petition is also being circulated.

We have been advised that it is within the powers of the NSW Minister for Planning to determine the overall route with an amendment of one section. In doing so he would have to consider:

- the Director-General's report on the infrastructure and the reports, advice and recommendations contained in the report, and
- any advice provided by the Minister having portfolio responsibility for the proponent (in this case the Minister for Roads and Ports),
- any findings or recommendations of the Planning Assessment Commission following a review in respect of the State significant infrastructure.

The Federal Minister's assessment can run concurrently with the State process. His focus is on issues covered by the EPBC Act. He must be provided with sufficient information on the project's impacts to enable him to make an informed determination. Before deciding whether or not to approve, or imposing conditions (if any) to an approval, he has discretion to publish his proposed decision for public comment (within 10 working days).

Given the disastrous impacts we believe that route 2C will have on the Lower Richmond koala population Friends of the Koala is calling for the NSW Minister for Planning, Brad Hazzard to impose a condition in his determination to modify the route of Section 10 by moving it away from the Blackwall Range and the nationally significant koala population.

However our real focus is on the Federal Minister. A lot of people who fought hard and long to achieve the Koala's 'vulnerable' listing under the EPBC Act will be watching.

For FOK members and koala supporters everywhere his decision in regard to Section 10 will be a litmus test of the Act's veracity for protecting the Koala. We are of the view that at the very least, he should offer further opportunity for community participation in this contentious matter of national significance by exercising his discretion to publish a draft decision for public exhibition and comment.

More targeted letter writing assistance will be circulated very soon. Please take advantage of it. Both the State and Federal governments need to hear from community members the extent and depth of their concerns for the future of Ballina's koalas.

—Lorraine Vass

—continued page 11

Save Our Species

In December 2013 Minister Parker announced the launch of a new approach to protecting and conserving NSW's native plants and animals. The Saving our Species initiative will use community participation, targeted investment, tailored approaches and the best available science to improve the State's poor conservation record.

Unfortunately the budget appropriation, \$4.8 million to fund priority projects over four years (2012-2015,) is a mere drop in the bucket, failing to match the initiative's scale and boldness. Nevertheless we confess our satisfaction with the Koala being included in the Iconic Species stream, (one of only four such species) therefore gaining Tier-1 priority.

We acknowledge that the Koala has already benefitted from Iconic Species funding here in the Northern Rivers. Without the financial incentives offered to local government across the region we would not have any Comprehensive Koala Plans of Management in the pipeline and our knowledge of local koala populations would also be much poorer.

You might be interested to learn that koala rehab groups like Friends of the Koala are identified as key project partners in the Iconic Species Project for the Koala *Phascolarctos cinereus*. Other key partners are landholders and landholder groups, local councils, the University of Sydney (School of Biological Sciences and Veterinary Science) and the University of Queensland (School of Geography). No mention of regional universities and the contribution they may be making to the project.

With Dan Lunney gone the Project's co-ordination has fallen to respected "local" John Turbill, in the Ecosystems and Threatened Species Unit, North East Region, Regional Operations Group, North Branch (Coffs Harbour). John knows Friends of the Koala's work very well, having had a long working relationship with us.

But what are the Koala Project's major features?

First the *NSW Recovery Plan for the Koala* is retained and the NSW Government is committed to its ongoing implementation. Well, that's good but the Plan was released in 2008 and it's now 2014. Surely it's up for statutory review?

The following suite of actions is being undertaken in 2012-2015:

- Provide incentives to landholders to manage and improve priority

- koala habitat on their land;
- Identify koala habitat and threats, and recommend mitigation measures for councils and the community;
- Evaluate the effectiveness of previous tree plantings to better target future conservation actions;
- Investigate where remedial actions can be most effective in providing drought refuges and reducing the impact of disease;
- Undertake community surveys to track changes in koala populations;
- Develop a standard approach to mapping koala habitat.

Mmm, wonder who's doing all that? Where? Who's being consulted?

The following actions are already underway:

- Working with private landholders to protect and rehabilitate koala habitat, and establish regional habitat corridors;
- Assisting local councils to identify and map koala habitat and prepare comprehensive koala plans of management;
- Better protecting koalas in national parks by managing wild dogs and designing hazard reduction burns to minimise impacts on koala habitat;
- Assessing the restoration of koala habitat, such as on the Liverpool Plains around Gunnedah, to provide guidance on restoration options;
- Working with koala rehabilitation groups to determine why koalas go into care;
- Sustaining community-based koala surveys to monitor change.

Well, we know about some of that. When I asked who in OEH was working with rehab groups on the reasons for koalas going into care, I was told a paper is in preparation. Working with ...? Nobody has talked to Friends of the Koala and we're definitely at the higher end when it comes to numbers admitted into care.

Friends of the Koala registered its interest in participating in the Save our Species initiative within days of the Minister's announcement. Let's hope a few more details about the Koala Project are communicated to us and other key partners very soon.

—Lorraine Vass



Koala
Phascolarctos cinereus



Conservation status
Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995 (NSW): Vulnerable
Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Australia): Vulnerable

Savvy Koalas Survive Bushfires

Queensland researchers have discovered two koalas fitted with GPS collars survived the January bushfires on Stradbroke Island, off Brisbane, by hiding out near a stream.

Last year University of Queensland researchers fitted the two koalas on the north side of the island with GPS tracking devices to collect data about habitat and food sources. When fires roared through the area in January, they thought the worst. However, returning in late February they were surprised to find the koalas had escaped the flames by taking refuge near a stream.

Team leader, Dr Bill Ellis says it is too early to tell if it was just luck, or if the koalas have developed survival skills.

"Obviously the koalas, even when they're really close to where the fire is really hot, if they're in the right place at the right time, they will survive," he said. "Whether it's just hit and miss or whether it's by design that animals end up in places where they're going to survive - they do it, so it's not beyond the realms of possibility that koalas know when danger is approaching and take precautions," he said.



Mum and bub, part of the Stradbroke Island study

Presented with this rare chance to learn more about koalas' natural instincts, the finding will be a basis for further research on how koalas cope in natural disasters, and adapt afterwards.

Friends of the Koala Awards 2014 – Call for Nominations

Each second year since the inaugural awards presentation was made in 2004, the Committee has called for nominations for the awards of Honorary Life Membership, Tree of Fame and Certificates of Appreciation to formally acknowledge the contribution made by Friends of the Koala members and supporters.

As in 2012, the award ceremony this year will take place during the Annual General Meeting in September. The award categories and nomination procedure are set out below:

Honorary Life Membership

Purpose: To acknowledge the contribution made by a member to the Friends of the Koala Inc. over a long period of time.

Eligibility: Members of Friends of the Koala, Inc.

Criteria: A minimum of 10 years productive membership, including some but not necessarily all the following components:

- Service on a range of FOK committees and or sub-committees
- Making a significant impact on FOK operations
- Promoting FOK through public presentations to community groups or professional forums
- Peer respect

Friends of the Koala Tree of Fame

Purpose: To acknowledge outstanding (i.e. above and beyond the call of duty) and sustained work which has been instrumental in ensuring the organizational success of Friends of the Koala, Inc.

Eligibility: Members of Friends of the Koala, Inc and others.

Criteria: Outstanding and sustained

work should include some but not necessarily all of the following:

- Leadership in identifying and applying initiatives which have strengthened FOK
- Applying new knowledge which has resulted in successful operational outcomes
- Championing FOK and its work in the wider community
- Community recognition

Certificate of Appreciation

Purpose: To acknowledge actions which support the Friends of the Koala Inc's objectives.

Eligibility: Any individual or corporation, institution, etc.

Criteria: Broad range of koala-friendly activities which could include:

- Assistance in a rescue
- Koala spotting
- Responsible koala management around the home
- Services in kind
- Sponsorship
- Fundraising

Nomination Procedure

The purpose and selection criteria for each award will be published in *Treetops* from time to time as decided by the Committee. Financial members of Friends of the Koala may make nominations for all three categories.

Nominations for **Honorary Life Membership** and the **FOK Tree of Fame** gallery must be made in writing and address the selection criteria by the deadline set by the Committee. The awards will be made, if possible, at a special event.

All nominations received will be assessed by the full Committee and a deci-

sion made on a simple majority vote. The nomination will form the basis for preparing a citation. This, together with a certificate and memento will be presented ceremonially.

sion made on a simple majority vote. The nomination will form the basis for preparing a citation. This, together with a certificate and memento will be presented ceremonially.

Nominations for **Certificates of Appreciation** can be made verbally to the President either by telephone or at a Committee Meeting throughout the year and should include the reasons why the nomination is being proposed. All nominations will be assessed by the full Committee and a decision made on a simple majority vote. Certificates will then be forwarded or presented to recipients as appropriate.

The Committee will receive nominations for the awards of Honorary Life Membership and the FOK Tree of Fame until Monday 30 June 2014.

Nominations may be emailed to:

info@friendsofthekoala.org

Posted to: The Secretary, Friends of the Koala Inc., PO Box 5034, EAST LISMORE NSW 2480, or left at the Koala Care Centre, Rifle Range Road, East Lismore.

Previous Award Recipients

Honorary Life Members: Effie Ablett, Ruth Barratt, OAM, Richard Barratt (dec.), Barbara Dobner, Audrey Hyde, John Hyde, Alister Janetzki, Patricia (Patty) O'Brien (dec.), Angela Owers, Wendy Reynolds, Margaret Russell, Dr. Geoff Tomkins, Lorraine Vass, Rick Vass, Magda Verbeek, Isa Webb, Mark Wilson

Tree of Fame: Ruth Barratt, AOM, Prof. Peter Baverstock, Bert Berriman (dec.), Audrey Hyde, John Hyde, Sue Phillips, Dr. Geoff Tomkins, Mark Wilson, Lorraine Vass.

Certificates of Appreciation: Australian Wildlife Hospital, Fran Horstmann, David Keep, Currumbin Wildlife Hospital.

tinues to provide good sales income even though we have altered the range of stock from the more garden ornamental plants to what I am terming 'revegetation trees & shrubs'.

Nursery News:

We have been very busy in the past few months potting up koala food trees to supply the projects listed above. We currently have around 1500 trees in stock with many more smaller seedlings on the way.

We were also very pleased to receive another donation of \$1,000 to the nursery via Landcare Australia. This was provided by Michael & Stephanie (they wished to remain basically anonymous) and it is their third donation of this nature to us.

—Mark Wilson

Tree Officer's Report

Koala Habitat Restoration Project:

The dry weather had delayed tree planting activities on the 30 or so properties selected as part of the Koala Habitat Restoration Project being managed by EnvITE. Activity proceeded with 505 trees being planted on properties from the Tregeagle Landcare Group in the week commencing 3rd March.

The majority of the other 2100 trees for the other properties are scheduled to be planted at the end of March to early April. I think many people are currently doing rain dances!!

School Projects:

◇ Late last year, Christine Freeman from the Dorrroughby Environmental Education Centre and I worked with

students from Lismore Public School to produce an informative video on koalas. The best video has now been fully edited and will soon appear on the new FoK website.

- ◇ On 29th January I presented a koala awareness information session to students from the Dunoon Public School.
- ◇ The most recent event as part of the Rous Wilson River Catchment Schools Restoration and Education Project will be held at Albert Park Public School on 14th March. The koala component included an information session as well as koala food tree planting on the banks of the Wilson River.

Lismore Car Boot Market:

The monthly Car Boot Market stall con-

NSW Wildlife Council Report

The Council's 31st General Meeting was held on 28 February with 11 member groups represented.

The opportunity for Council members to meet Peter Stathis, recently appointed Biodiversity and Wildlife Senior Team Leader was timely and appreciated. The new Biodiversity and Wildlife unit looks like it might be one of the more positive outcomes of OEH's on-going structural re-alignment, which Peter described as a Line of Business Re-Structure.

The Unit sits in the Nature Conservation Section of the Park Conservation & Heritage Branch. It will comprise two teams, Wildlife and Monitoring and Improvement. The two team leaders have yet to be appointed.

Peter had been in the job for only four days and his address to the Council gave me heart that we could expect greater emphasis to be given to the conservation outcomes of wildlife rehabilitation groups' work. For me this was rein-



Peter Stathis (seated), Biodiversity and Wildlife Senior Team Leader and Linda Crawley, Acting Wildlife Licensing Team Leader (on his left)

forced by the brief description he circulated of his Unit's activities and priorities:

- Co-ordinates the implementation of actions in the NPWS Priority Action Statement (PAS) for threatened populations, species, communities and threatening processes;
- Provides technical support for Regions in the implementation of recovery planning on-Park;
- Co-ordinates the Find It and Fix It and Wild Count programs;
- Leads the identification and implementation of strategic monitoring of vulnerable ecosystems, communities, species and populations;
- Assists the Regions to assess biodiversity values and manage native flora and fauna;
- Co-ordinates the application of consistent vegetation mapping standards for Parks and Reserves;
- Develops strategy and standards for marine mammals, marine reptiles and seabirds;

- Supports Park Management Branches and Regional Operations with high quality technical advice and training;
- Liaises with State and Commonwealth agencies on wildlife management and enforcement matters;
- Manages wildlife licensing and liaises with the Government Licensing Scheme and outlets in relation to wildlife matters.

NPWS Delivery Plan Priorities 2014-15:

- Saving our Species program
- Conservation Priorities Project
- Horse Riding in Wilderness Monitoring
- Wild Count (long-term on-Park fauna monitoring program using motion-sensitive digital cameras to assess the parts of the landscape native animals occupy)
- Find It and Fix It (staff nominated priority projects)

Peter had previously held the position of Manager of the [Parks] Management Effectiveness Unit (MEU) which had a State-wide, NPWS-wide co-ordination function to help develop, implement and evaluate programs to achieve effectiveness and efficiency in Parks management.

While the new position retains a very strong element of centralised support to the Regions, helping 'to close the adaptive management loop', it also appears to recognise that managing and recovering biodiversity extends way beyond the Parks Estate and salaried staff. To be successful the hearts, minds and energy of the whole community must be engaged.

Wildlife rehabbers are community members who are already committed to the welfare and conservation of native fauna. We're organised, trained and we deliver measurable outcomes. Our voluntary efforts are never formally acknowledged in NPWS reporting because we don't work in the Parks system.

I'd like to think the new Biodiversity and Wildlife Unit is an indication that NPWS is reaching out at long last and that the voluntary work rehabbers provide will be given the recognition and respect it deserves.

The other notable item of business at the

February meeting was the appointment of a part-time (2 days a week) Executive Officer. The appointee, Chris Lloyd, is well known in the wildlife rehab sector. His initial contract is for three months.



NWC Chair, Audrey Koosmen and Chris Lloyd

The Council is now in its ninth year, and the move to engage paid support is, I believe, a major step forward.

—Lorraine Vass

Advocacy and Policy Reform

This short activity report will have to suffice for this issue; after all the Summer holidays when everyone except community volunteers take a break accounted for most of the quarter.

We lodged objecting submissions on the Kings Forest Residential Development (Koala Management Outcomes under the *EPBC Act* referral), a DA in Pinegroves Rd., Myocum, the Federal/NSW Draft Assessment Bilateral Agreement, a DA in Greenwood Dve., Goonellabah, the West Byron Bay Urban Release Area proposal, the Draft *EPBC Act* Koala Referral Guidelines and the Kings Forest Residential Development Modification Requests to the Concept Plan and Stage 1 Project Approval.

We also lodged comments on a DA in Rous Rd., Goonellabah and Amendments to the [NSW] Threatened Species Priorities Action Statement (PAS).

In regard to Section 10 of the Woolgoolga to Ballina Pacific Highway Upgrade project, we've written letters to various State ministers and the Federal Minister for the Environment, a letter to the editor, a media release, requested a meeting with Member for Page, Kevin Hogan and participated in a rally outside the Ballina office of Minister for the North Coast, Don Page. We've also provided data on koala mortalities associated with the Ewingsdale-Tintenbar Upgrade to the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) and we've forwarded our records of koalas in the Richmond Valley to Biolink who are undertaking the habitat study.

Ros Irwin has represented FOK at meetings of the Lismore Koala Implementation Group and the Biodiversity Management Strategy Stakeholder Reference Group. I've participated in two public information sessions

—continued page 11

Lismore Council's Biodiversity Management Strategy

As many of you may know, Lismore Council has been in the process of developing a Biodiversity Management Strategy, and Donna Graham, our former Vice President, was FOK's representative on the Stakeholder Reference Group (SRG) involved in that process. Late last year Council placed on public exhibition the discussion paper developed by that group called 'How do we protect and manage biodiversity in an active rural region?'

Submissions to the paper closed last November, and the SRG will be meeting on 5 March in the first of three proposed meetings this year to finalise a Biodiversity Management Strategy to be adopted by Council, hopefully later this year. As Donna has departed for a job with Douglas Shire Council, I have replaced Donna as FOK's representative.

However, to ensure that the SRG communicates directly with Councillors to maximise mutual understanding, Council has established a Councillor Feedback Group (CFG) comprising Crs Clough, Ekins, Marks, Ritchie and Schiebel. The CFG will meet on the same dates as the SRG and there will be a one hour crossover where the two groups will meet together. Apparently this is a new process that Council has instigated on more complex issues.

Council has also appointed an independent facilitator, Tracey Stinson, who has met individually already with each of the members of both groups to gain a good understanding of their positions, attitudes and any concerns. At the SRG Tracey will be seeking to gain agreement from SRG members on all points of deliberation, comments and agreement that are to be recorded and present-

—from page 10 held by Byron Shire Council on the Draft Byron Coast CKPoM and represented FOK at meetings of the Tweed Coast Koala Advisory Group Committee and the Koala Connections Steering Committee.

The year ahead promises to be a cracker. The State government has advised review of the *Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995*, the *Native Vegetation Act 2003* and the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*. The EPA has flagged it intends to seek broader community consultation on an improved approach before making any changes to the Private native Forestry Code. The North Coast E Zones and the State's new Planning laws are still unresolved.

—Lorraine Vass

ed to the CFG. However as this implies consensus, which is rarely possible and when insisted on sometimes leads to those more willing to seek an outcome giving up too much, I sought clarification on this as one of my concerns. Tracey assured me that whilst consensus will be sought if it can't be reached then majority/minority positions will be recorded.

The first meeting took place on 5 March, and the majority of the time the SRG had together prior to the CFG joining the meeting focused on a review of the submissions and members' expectations in regard to the SRG. Theresa Adams, Council's ecologist employed for a year to deliver the Biodiversity Management Strategy, then presented the framework within which she intends to develop it. It seemed a logical and straightforward framework but a number of members seemed to consider it unnecessarily complex.

If the first meeting is anything to go by, achieving an outcome that suits all members, let alone the broader community, may be a herculean task. The overwhelming majority of submissions to the draft paper supported regulation as well as incentives and community education, with Council providing leadership in regard to its own practices. However, it was clear that the Council is reluctant to consider regulation in the aftermath of the divisive debates experienced with development of Lismore's LEP and Comprehensive Koala Plan of Management. Whilst all members supported the notion of incentives and trials of their effectiveness, it remains to be seen whether they do work in practice.

—Ros Irwin

—from page 7 amine the immune cells' expression of important cytokines. These cytokines are used by immune cells to communicate with each other and are absolutely critical in determining whether the immune response will be successful to defeat infectious agents or not. With the help of such a tool to measure immune function many more investigations into koala infectious diseases become possible. For example we are examining the role of koala retrovirus on the immune response and why some koala's are prone to chlamydial infections and some not. Also environmental factors, such as Eucalyptus plant toxins, will be included in these studies to analyse effects of the koala's diet on its immune function. The accomplishments of these authors have opened up doors for us and we are looking forward to an exciting time of new koala research from the KIDReG.

—Caroline Marschner

Implementing Lismore's CKPoM

Now that Lismore's Comprehensive Koala Plan of Management (CKPoM) has been adopted the Council has established a Koala Implementation Group (KIG). I'm FOK's representative on this group together with Ross Goldingay, Vanessa Pelly, Tara Patel, Chris Moran, Jim Kinkead, Lucy Kingsley, with Council staff Fiona Sinclair as Chair and Jane Metcalfe as admin assistant.

The role of the KIG is to assist Council staff in prioritising and implementing the non-regulatory activities and actions that will deliver on the performance measures identified in the *Imagine Lismore 4 year Plan 2013-2017*. These are:

- Develop, implement and train staff in regulatory and monitoring procedures
- Implement habitat restoration and management actions
- Develop and implement communication and education activities
- Implement a dog management program, and
- Audit, develop and implement koala road safety measures.

The KIG has met twice and is planning to meet on a monthly basis as long as necessary. So far the group has been considering how \$30,000 in the current budget should be spent and, given the Council's deadline for budget submissions of late March, what funding submissions should be sought for 2014/2015. Bearing in mind that the Council is introducing 'zero based budgeting', (which means that every line item of the budget must be approved, rather than only variations to previous budgets) this will be no easy task!

One of the major concerns for FOK is that resources provided for the KIG suggest implementation will be a very long process. Fiona has 2 days a week to devote to the work of the KIG and Vanessa Tallon, who's assisting the group particularly in regard to community education, has only 10% of her time. We're now nearly halfway through the term of this Council and FOK would like to think the majority of the CKPoM is implemented before the next Council election in 2016.

More of this later.

The official launch of implementation of the CKPoM will take place on Wednesday 7th May at 9.30am on the property of a Tregeagle macadamia orchardist. Watch for details closer to the date.

—Ros Irwin

Draft Byron Coast Comprehensive Koala Plan of Management – Submissions Required

The Draft Byron Coast CKPoM has been approved by the Byron Shire Council to be put on public exhibition. Supporting submissions will assist Council in deciding whether or not to adopt the Draft Plan. Even when adopted by Council the Plan will still need to be approved by the NSW Director-General, Planning and Infrastructure. The following notes may help you frame your submission, providing reasons why you support the Draft Plan (it can be downloaded from Council's website at www.byron.nsw.gov.au/public-exhibition):

Why is a CKPoM needed?

- Koalas are now a nationally listed threatened species.
- Threats to ongoing population recovery and longer-term viability are real (an estimated 240 koalas remain in the study area).
- Evidence abounds of the influence of isolation and lack of connectivity for coastal populations (inbreeding, susceptibility to stochastic events)
- There is an absence of consistency and best practice measures in the way development applications are constructed and assessed.

Most importantly...

- A CKPoM enables koala management at a scale that is relevant to the species, and
- Reduces impost on individual development applications to have to prepare an Individual KPoM by imposing a standardised approach to management of koalas and their habitat across the lands to which the Plan applies.

Traditionally, the working provisions of Comprehensive Koala Plans of Management are triggered by the Development process, however development is only one component of koala management and recovery.

The Byron Coast CKPoM deliberately takes a broader, more holistic view and attempts to integrate recovery and longer-term management needs of the Byron Coast's koala population into account by way of additional aspirational provisions that are specifically intended to engender a coordinated, whole of government and community approach.

The Plan's Vision

To enable a long-term, sustainable future for koala populations in the Byron Coast Study Area (the land to which the plan applies).

Aims

a) to increase the area of *Preferred Koala Habitat* in central parts of BCSA by

20% to 1,800ha,

b) to enable a self-sustaining, stable population of 250 – 300 koalas, and
c) to create a community that is well informed and collectively committed to a long-term, sustainable future for Byron Coast koalas.

Challenges

To provide a strategic framework that will:

- focus, prioritise and direct management actions required to achieve the Vision, and
- allow Council to respond to specific opportunities and issues as they arise.

Two Koala Management Areas (KMAs)

The Plan divides the Study Area into a North Byron Coast KMA and a South Byron Coast KMA, each with its own management aims.

How best to focus and direct management effort into appropriate areas? Identify areas with resident koala populations capable of long-term survival given

- effective habitat management,
- protection from threats and
- enhancement habitat linkages to assisting the free movement of animals.

Five Koala Management Precincts (KMPs)

Similarly within the two KMAs five KMPs and their focal issues have been identified. KMPs also delineate the boundaries of "important" populations for purposes of the Federal *EPBC Act*

1. North Ocean Shores
2. West Mullumbimby
3. Brunswick Heads - Tyagarah
4. West Byron – St. Helena
5. Suffolk Park – Broken Head.

The Plan provides strategies for koala populations in KMPs being maintained by recruitment and dispersal from other populations in the general area.

It envisages KMPs connected via a network of strategic linkages within which habitat rehabilitation. Planting koala food trees is encouraged through voluntary participation. It also proposes linkages anchored on key nodes along Pacific Highway that are capable of providing safe under-road passage for koalas.

CKPoM Exemptions

The Plan does not apply to DAs that do not require the removal of native vegetation and which otherwise relate to:

- Boundary adjustments, alterations and/or additions to lawfully erected buildings, or
- lands that are located outside of KMPs that either singly or together have an area of less than 1ha.

The Assessment Process

- Where removal of native vegetation is envisaged, the CKPoM requires a Vegetation Assessment Report (VAR) to be prepared.
- If outside of a KMP and preferred koala food trees are present, a Koala Activity Assessment Report (KAAR) must also be prepared.
- KAARs are not required in KMPs.

Development Control

The CKPoM promulgates a set of standard development controls that are to be applied in all areas where koalas are present.

All areas within KMPs are to be managed as if resident koala populations are present at any given development site *i.e.*:

- No loss of PKFTs > 100mmdbh.
- Prohibition on keeping of domestic dogs.
- Vehicle calming devices & fencing.

Outside of KMPs and in areas where the assessment process has determined that koalas are not present, discretionary capacity has been provided to enable a relaxing of the standard development controls.

Other Elements of the Plan include:

- Rehabilitation of koala habitat
- Council to prepare and implement a Koala Habitat Rehabilitation Program
- Compensation for loss of native vegetation (i.e. loss of native vegetation as a consequence of development requires compensation in the form of financial contribution to Council's KHRP or a guarantee (bank bond) if required ; compensation works to be undertaken by proponent
- Community education
- Monitoring & reporting
- Biennial monitoring program of the Plan with a major review every 6 years; built in early warning system.
- Assisted recovery informed by the monitoring program, - measures to speed up recovery of the koala population north of the Brunswick River are also included.

The deadline for submissions (either in hard or soft copy) is 21 March 2014.

Please address your submission to:

Mr Ken Gainger
General Manager

Postal Address:

PO Box 219

MULLUMBIMBY NSW 2482

or email to:

submissions@byron.nsw.gov.au

Bulletin Board

New Members

A very warm welcome to the following new members who have been formally accepted into Friends of the Koala over recent months.

Julie Reid of Jiggi, **Trudi Yates** of Goonellabah, **Helene Holthe & Anthony Hayes** of Gurrards Hill, **Jeff McLaren** of Tucki Tucki, **Paige Matthews** of Armidale, **Clare Shelton** of Tuncester, **Jonathan Rigby** and **Doug Ferguson** of Lismore, and **Graham Jordan** of East Lismore. **Lynne & Jim DeWeaver** of Chilcotts Grass and **Mia Cuyler & Sam Davies** of Federal all re-joined. **Marco Miconi** of Zurich, Switzerland took out international membership.

GVESHO Assistance

Grants from any level of government are few and far between so the announcement by Minister Greg Hunt that we have been successful in the 2013-2014 round of the [Federal] Grants to Voluntary Environment, Sustainability and Heritage Organisations program is welcomed. The grant of \$3,000 is to assist with administrative costs.

Koalas at Nimbin

24% of 240 participants in the Nimbin Neighbourhood & Information Centre's recent Sustainability Survey had observed a koala within 500m of where they live in the previous six month period. Encouraging confirmation of the swell in reported koala sightings around Nimbin. Let's hope that all these good folk remembered to lodge their sightings on FOK's database.

Myall Koala & Environment Group

The Hawks Nest and Tea Gardens koala population was declared "endangered" under the NSW *Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995*, and an approved Recovery Plan adopted back in 2003. Since the Plan's implementation numbers have gradually increased from 12 to over 23 known koalas, demonstrating just how slowly a depleted population takes to recover.

In 2013 the Myall Group carried out a residents survey: 88% of participants said they had seen a koala; 85% thought free trees was the top incentive for residents; 80% valued the presence of koalas (for tourism, natural values and local identity); 63% realised the population was "endangered".

Clive McAlpine in Tweed

The University of Queensland's Professor Clive McAlpine, (School of Geography, Planning & Environmental Management) and co-ordinator of the Koala Research Network is spending some of

his scant leisure time in Chillingham these days. He's flagged interest in our Northern Rivers koalas and their problems, recently attending a meeting of the Koala Connections Steering Group.



Australian Koala Alliance

The notion of a national collaborative network to support and lead koala conservation was raised yet again at the National Koala Conference in Port Macquarie last May. This time though something may be done about it. 70 people representing various local organisations and individuals involved in koala conservation on the Sunshine Coast launched the entity presently known as the Australian Koala Alliance (aKa) in late November at Landsborough, Queensland.

The next step is to bring together a small number of representative members/supporters from across the existing network for an intensive strategy and campaign workshop planned for April.

Adelaide Koala and Wildlife Hospital

South Australia's only koala hospital, a converted house a few doors from the Southern Animal Hospital located on the Anzac Highway, Plympton, was officially opened in February. About 80 people from across Adelaide are signed on as volunteers, including veterinarians and vet nurses. Operating since December, more than 100 animals have been treated so far. Corporate sponsorship is being sought to keep the Hospital afloat.



The Great Koala Count

National Parks Association Ecologist, Dr Grainne Cleary has released the various reports generated by the Count held in November 2013. Citizen Scientists from Victoria, South Australia, south-east Queensland and New South Wales took part. The data has been categorised in Interim Biogeographic Regionalisation for Australia (IBRA) regions and Local Government Areas (LGAs). In the South Eastern Queensland region participants were spread over 17 LGAs: Ballina, Brisbane, Byron, Clarence Valley, Gold Coast, Gympie, Kyogle, Lismore, Lockyer Valley, Moreton Bay, Redland,

Richmond Valley, Scenic Rim, Somerset, Sunshine Coast, Tenterfield and Tweed.

Individual reports have been compiled on the Ballina, Byron, Kyogle, Lismore, Tweed, Gunnedah and Port Stephens local government areas. All reports are posted for downloading on the NPA's Data Portal at www.koalacount.org.au. The koala sightings have been uploaded to both the Atlas of Living Australia and Atlas of NSW Wildlife.

Watch out for a bigger and better Koala Count in November.

World Wildlife Day

The Inaugural World Wildlife Day was celebrated on Monday 3 March. In December 2013, the Sixty-eighth session of the United Nations General Assembly decided to proclaim 3 March, the day of the adoption of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), as World Wildlife Day, to celebrate and raise awareness of the world's wild fauna and flora. In its resolution, the General Assembly reaffirmed the intrinsic value of wildlife and its various contributions, including ecological, genetic, social, economic, scientific, educational, cultural, recreational and aesthetic, to sustainable development and human well-being, and recognized the important role of CITES in ensuring that



international trade does not threaten species' survival.

New Feed Tree Plantations

Licensing agreements between Lismore City Council and Friends of the Koala to enable the establishment of new koala feed tree plantations in Goonellabah and South Lismore were approved at Council's March meeting.

2014 -2015 Subscriptions

Due 1st July

It's nearly time to renew your membership with Friends of the Koala. Even if you are not an active member of the group, your annual membership fees go a long way to support the organisation.

You can make a small (or large!) donation at the time of your membership renewal (see form on page 15).

Add your chosen amount in the donation field on the form and we will send you a separate tax deductible receipt (for amounts over \$2.00).

Plant it and they WILL come!

Koalas finding a new home in Tristan Parade on the edge of Mullumbimby... one of the 'Koala Management Precincts' in the draft Byron Coast Comprehensive Koala Plan of Management

This Koala was photographed in a five year old Swamp Mahogany *Eucalyptus robusta*, part of a swamp sclerophyll planting completed in 2008 at the property of Jane Wickers and Felicity Grace in Tristan Parade Mullumbimby. The importance of the planting is the connection to existing fragmented patches of Koala habitat, providing more connectivity in the landscape for safe Koala movement.



In the beginning, Jane and Felicity researched the type of plant community, 'Swamp Sclerophyll', that was natural on their patch. Prior to the planting the land was completely bare of trees. Over a ten year period they planned and plant-

ed, including larger numbers of dominant community species such as Broad-leaved Paperbark (*Melaleuca quinque-nervia*) and Swamp Mahogany (*Eucalyptus robusta*), a Koala food tree favourite but also including smaller numbers of other species to increase the diversity within the plant community and landscape. Now the planting looks like it was always there and even the Koalas are finding it attractive in such a short time which is a great measure of success in an area of increasing human development.

Byron Shire Council is also seeking to provide a happier future for Koalas with the Draft Byron Coast Comprehensive Koala Plan of Management now on public exhibition. The plan identifies Koala Management Precincts which are areas that contain one or more resident koala population. The Plan identifies five precincts and these areas

will be managed to ensure koala friendly development occurs.

A quote Dave Rawlins, a resident of Tristan Parade:

"As a resident who lives in an identified Koala Management Precinct I hope that now koalas and humans can co-exist. Over the 15 years of living on my property we and our neighbours have done tree planting works for koalas. Due to the pressure of inappropriate development, dogs and disease the koala population has been declining over this time. We must be vigilant in order to stop this species becoming locally extinct. However, with a strong CKPoM and council support I feel now there is a chance we can reverse this trend of our declining koala population".

Koala Connections, an initiative of Byron and Tweed Shire Council, is assisting people with Koala Plantings on their properties. Enquires in Byron Shire to Jo Green ph 02 6626 7068

—Jo Green

Member Profile – Julie Reid

Julie is a very new member and still finding her way through the varied services and partnerships FoK has established.

She has been involved in wildlife caring since 1992 caring for and rescuing representatives from all taxonomic classes. She currently has five arboreal mammals in care but has not reached the stage where koalas are included.



There is a retirement vision however.

Julie is fortunate to live in the Jiggi Valley with Barbara Dobner in the upper catchment releasing koalas. Julie's primary focus is the restoration of habitat for all species. She is currently involved in co-ordinating work on properties restoring koala habitat.

Enlightenment came working with Lorraine on the LCC Draft Comprehensive Koala Plan of Management for SE Lismore Stakeholder Reference Group.

What is the best thing about where you live?

It is mine, and an escape from the imperfect world beyond, more importantly I have over 35 years created a 'Wildlife Refuge' (now on the title) that is home

to 104 fauna species with four of them being on the threatened species list.

There are an additional seven threatened plant species.

What are you reading?

Today, Morand soil classifications for Lismore Landscapes. Next to my bed Lonely Planet Bangladesh

What is your favourite movie?

I just don't see enough movies to have a fav.

Favourite hobby/pastime?

Bush regeneration, kayaking and being a third of a fabulous all girl band (min age 43).

Idea of a perfect Sunday?

Sleep in, tea and toast in bed and go nowhere; do not turn on computer.

Most memorable travel experience?

Travel is my passion so it is hard to choose. The most recent; hiring a 4x4 and travelling through Namibia with my grandson and last year spending time in an Alaskan Inupiat village amongst the polar bears. My destinations generally involve some critically endangered species.

What would you like to be doing in 5 years?

Continuing to be involved in environmental restoration projects (paid and voluntary) with an aim of having the North Coast covered before I die.

Who is the person you would most like to meet?

David Attenborough and I would ask for a job

What is your most memorable koala experience?

I get so excited every time I see a koala, or any wildlife for that matter, even the native blue banded bee in my bathroom yesterday. Best experience; possibly hearing the first demonic sound of a koala on the ridge adjacent to my property.

Dates for your Diary

21 March 2014: deadline for submissions on the Draft Byron Coast Comprehensive Koala Plan of Management

22 March 2014: Friends of the Koala Management Committee Meeting, 2pm. SCU (P160)

20 April 2014: Friends of the Koala Stall, Lismore Car Boot Market, Lismore Square

07 May 2014: Launch of implementing the Comprehensive Koala Plan of Management for south-east Lismore. Details to be advised

12 May 2014: NSW Wildlife Council 32nd General Meeting, OEH Hurstville

24 May 2014: Friends of the Koala Management Committee Meeting, 2pm. SCU

27 May 2014: Contributions due for Treetops (June issue)

Application/renewal form — ‘Friends of the Koala, Inc.’ Membership runs from 1st July to 30th June.		I/We are interested in: (please tick)
Name.....		<input type="checkbox"/> Tree Planting
Postal address.....		<input type="checkbox"/> Plant Nursery work
City/Suburb.....	Postcode.....Country.....	<input type="checkbox"/> Caring for sick & injured koalas
Phone.....	Mobile.....	<input type="checkbox"/> Leaf collection
Email.....		<input type="checkbox"/> Rescue
Membership category (please tick)		<input type="checkbox"/> Committee / Administration
<input type="checkbox"/> Ordinary—Individual/Family (within Australia) \$20		<input type="checkbox"/> Fundraising
<input type="checkbox"/> Concession—Full time Student/Pensioner (within Australia)..... \$10		<input type="checkbox"/> Publicity
<input type="checkbox"/> International—Individual/Family (outside Australia) \$50		<input type="checkbox"/> Education
I/We would like to make an additional donation of : \$.....		<input type="checkbox"/> Surveys / Mapping
Total payment is: \$.....		<input type="checkbox"/> Information Technology
		<input type="checkbox"/> Phone Roster
		<input type="checkbox"/> I/We would like someone to phone and explain about volunteering with Friends of the Koala

Payment by:

Direct Debit (your name as reference) to: Friends of the Koala Inc., BSB 722-744
A/C 38533 Southern Cross Credit Union Ltd.

or Cash (**preferred**) Cheque Money order

Credit card (**amounts over \$20**) Cardholder Name.....

Card Type (e.g. Visa).....Number.....Expiry Date (mm/yy)..../....

Post to: *The Treasurer, Friends of the Koala Inc., PO Box 5034, East Lismore, NSW 2480*

I agree to abide by the licensing requirements, the constitution and the policies of ‘Friends of the Koala’ Inc.

Signature.....Date...../...../.....

The Management Committee reserves the right to refuse any application for membership or renewal.

Please tick here if a receipt **is** required

Please tick here if you would like to receive Treetops by email (~ 2 mb pdf colour file)

Office Use Only

Date Received.....Receipt #.....Donation Receipt #.....Date Passed by Committee.....

Contact Information: 24 hr Rescue Hotline: 6622 1233 Koala Care Centre: 6621 4664			
email: info@friendsofthekoala.org		web: www.friendsofthekoala.org	
President	Lorraine Vass	6629 8388	president@friendsofthekoala.org
Vice President	Ros Irwin	6621 5906	roslyn.irwin@gmail.com
Secretary			
Treasurer	Susannah Keogh	0431 707 883	sjkl@inet.net.au
Trees Officer	Mark Wilson	6624 5032	info@friendsofthekoala.org
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Care Centre Coordinator	Lola Whitney	6621 3523	lola.fok@hotmail.com
Training Officer			
Leaf Harvesting Coordinator	Dot Moller	6628 4270	dotcockburn@bigpond.com
Phone Roster Coordinator	Pat Barnidge	6622 3690	pat.fok@hotmail.com

Volunteers Working For: Koala Rescue and Rehabilitation . Advocacy . Education . Environmental Repair



Found injured wildlife in NSW?
Download the Wildlife Rescue App

IF UNDELIVERABLE RETURN TO:
'FRIENDS OF THE KOALA' INC
PO BOX 5034
EAST LISMORE NSW 2480
PRINT POST APPROVED
1100002148

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Treetops is printed on recycled paper.



Deadline for next newsletter:
Tuesday 27th May 2014
Contributions gratefully accepted
– please post to FOK or email
info@friendsofthekoala.org

